

Subcommittee on Interim Strong Mayor
Staff Report on City Councils-James Ingram and Catherine Tran

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of the City Council in Large California Cities

City	Population, 2005	Form of Government	Council Size	Selection Method (at-large/district)	Ordinance passage margin (number/%)	Mayoral Veto Authority	Veto Override Margin (number/%)
Los Angeles	3,844,829	Strong Mayor-Council	15	District Elections	8/15 or 53.3%	Yes	10 for regular ordinances (2/3 or 66.7%); 12 for some ordinances (3/4 or 75%).
San Diego	1,266,753 ¹	Strong Mayor-Council	8	District Elections	5/8 or 62.5%	Yes	5/8 or 62.5%
San Jose	912,332	Council-Manager (weak mayor)	10 + Mayor	10 District Elections; Mayor elected at-large	6 votes or 55%	No; Mayor votes with Council.	N/A
San Francisco	739,426	Strong Mayor-County Board of Supervisors ²	11	District Elections	Majority of all members on regular ordinances; 2/3 majority of all members on others (6/11 on regular and 8/11 on others; this is 55% and 73%, respectively)	Yes	2/3 vote on regular majority ordinances; 3/4 on others (these are 8/11 and 9/11 (73% and 82%, respectively).

¹ The 2003 U.S. Census projection was used for this figure; an accurate figure for 2005 was unavailable.

² San Francisco is a consolidated city-county, and thus the County Board of Supervisors is the legislative body.

Long Beach	474,014	Council-Manager (weak mayor)	9	9 District Elections	At least 5 votes or 56%	Yes	5/9 within 30 days
Fresno	461,116	Strong Mayor-Council	7	7 District Elections	At least 4 votes or 57%	Yes	5/7 within 30 days
Sacramento	456,441	Council-Manager (weak mayor)	8 + Mayor	8 District Elections; Mayor elected at-large	At least 5 votes or 56%	No	N/A
Oakland	395,274	Strong Mayor-Council	8	7 District Elections; 1 At-Large Election	5 votes needed for all actions. Mayor may vote only to break a tie. If there is a 4-4 tie and the Mayor votes to pass an ordinance, the majority is 5/9; if 5/8 councilmembers vote to pass an ordinance, the majority is 5/8 (56% or 63%, respectively).	No	N/A
Santa Ana	340,368	Council-Manager (weak mayor)	6 + Mayor	6 District elections, Mayor elected at-large	Majority of members = 4/7 or 57%	No	N/A
Anaheim	331,804	Council-Manager (weak mayor)	4 + Mayor	At-large	3 votes unless otherwise specified = 3/5 or 60%	No	N/A

Bakersfield	295,536	Council-Manager (weak mayor)	7 + Mayor as presiding officer	7 Wards, Mayor elected at-large	Majority of members = 4/6 or 66.7%; Mayor votes when there is a tie vote	No	N/A
Riverside	290,086	Council-Manager (weak mayor)	7 + Mayor	7 Wards; Mayor elected at-large	4/7 to pass an ordinance, or 57%; 5/7 votes needed to amend budget after passage (71%). Mayor presides over Council, but may only vote to break tie.	No	N/A
Stockton	286,926	Council-manager (weak mayor)	6 + Mayor	6 nominated by district, but elected at-large; Mayor elected at-large	Majority = 4/7 or 57%	No	N/A

Both Table 1 and Table 2 were assembled based on a search of the city charters, administrative & municipal codes, and official city websites for all cities included.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of the City Council in Large United States Cities

City	Pop'n, 2005	Form of Government	Council Size	Selection Method (at-large/district)	Ordinance passage margin (number/%)	Mayoral Veto Authority	Veto Override Margin (number/%)
New York City, NY	8,213,839	Strong Mayor-Council	51	District Elections	Majority of all members = 26/51 or 51%	Yes. If mayor takes no action in 30 days, it becomes law.	2/3 majority of all to override; 66.7% is 34 members.
Los Angeles	3,844,829	Strong Mayor-Council	15	District Elections	8/15 or 53.3%.	Yes	10 for regular ordinances (2/3 or 66.7%); 12 for some ordinances (3/4 or 75%).
Chicago, IL	2,842,518	Strong Mayor-Council	50 ³	Ward Elections	25 + Mayor to break tie, or 26 (52%), on money bills; majority of council present on regular bills, plus mayor if there is a tied vote.	Yes	34 votes needed to override mayor's veto. That is 2/3.
Houston, TX	2,076,189	Mayor-Council	14 + Mayor ⁴	9 Districts, 5 At-Large (Mayor is 15 th member)	Majority of members = 8/15 or 53%	No	N/A

³ Chicago legislators are called "Alderman" even when they are women.

⁴ Under Houston's Charter, the city must create two additional council districts if the city's population reaches 2.1 million.

Philadelphia, PA	1,463,281	Strong Mayor-Council	17	10 Districts; 7 At-Large Elections	Majority of members = 9/17 or 53%	Yes, including item veto. Mayor may not veto spending for Auditor or Civil Service Comm.	Mayor must veto within 10 days, Council may override by 2/3 within 7 days after veto. 2/3 of 17 is 12, which is 71%.
Phoenix, AZ	1,461,575	Council-Manager (weak mayor)	8 + Mayor	8 District Elections; Mayor elected at-large	Majority of all members = 5/9 or 56%	No	N/A
San Diego	1,266,753 ⁵	Strong Mayor-Council	8	District Elections	5/8 or 62.5%	Yes	5/8 or 62.5%
San Antonio, TX	1,256,509	Council-manager (Mayor as at-large member)	10 + Mayor	10 District Elections; Mayor elected at-large	Majority of all members = 6/11 or 55%. If there are 6 or more vacancies, a smaller number may act until vacancies filled.	No	N/A
Dallas, TX	1,213,825	Council-Manager (Mayor as at-large member)	14 + Mayor	14 District Elections; Mayor elected at-large	Majority of all members = 8/15 or 53%	No	N/A

⁵ The 2003 U.S. Census projection was used for this figure; an accurate figure for 2005 was unavailable.

San Jose	912,332	Council-Manager (weak mayor)	10 + Mayor	10 District elections; Mayor elected at-large	6 votes or 55%	No; Mayor votes with Council.	N/A
Detroit, MI	886,671	Strong Mayor-Council	9	At-Large Elections	Majority of members = 5/9 or 56%	Yes	2/3 majority within 1 week of veto
Indianapolis, IN	784,118	Strong Mayor-City-County Council ⁶	29	25 District Elections; 4 At-Large Elections	Majority of members = 15/29 or 51.7%	Yes	2/3 majority
Jacksonville, FL ⁷	782,623	Mayor-Council	19	14 District Elections; 5 At-Large Elections	Depends on the type of measure	Yes	Depends on the type of measure
San Francisco ⁸	739,426	Strong Mayor-County Board of Supervisors	11	District Elections	Majority of all members on regular ordinances; 2/3 majority of all members on others (6/11 on regular and 8/11 on others; this is 55% and 73%, respectively)	Yes	2/3 vote on regular majority ordinances; 3/4 on others (these are 8/11 and 9/11 (73% and 82%, respectively).

⁶ Indianapolis consolidated with Marion County to form a city-county whose government is called Unigov. The legislative body is the City-County Council.

⁷ Jacksonville, Florida is the result of a merger of the city of Jacksonville with the rest of Duval County.

⁸ San Francisco is a consolidated city-county, and thus the County Board of Supervisors is the legislative body.